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ABSTRACT

One of a series of work-based interviews about occupations in Australia, this booklet presents a personal interview with a veterinary nurse about her job. The following questions are answered: what the vet nurse does, why the person chose the field of employment, how the person found the job, what she does and doesn't like about it, what kind of training was needed, what the nurse does during a working week, her co-workers, the hours, and how the work contributes to society. Cartoons are used to enliven the material, and a glossary listing 14 words is included. Although designed to be used in literacy classes with adult new readers, the booklets are also appropriate for use with elementary and secondary students in career exploration and career education. (KC)

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ED 399 462

Hazel Edwards

Workdays

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a Vet Nurse

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Workdays

a day in the life of ...

a Vet Nurse

Name Chris Brennan

Aged 22

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a day in the life of...
a Vet Nurse

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WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO?

I'm a veterinary nurse. I look after animals. A vet nurse is the cleaner, receptionist and the nurse. Cleaning is a big part of it. So you need the right attitude. I like the *scientific* side. I enjoy the nursing best.

WHAT DOES WORK MEAN TO YOU?

Work means earning a living. But I like work. It's a big part of my life. I like to see special cases get better. I like knowing that I do a good job. Mainly it's the animal nursing I like. I'm a practical person.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS JOB?

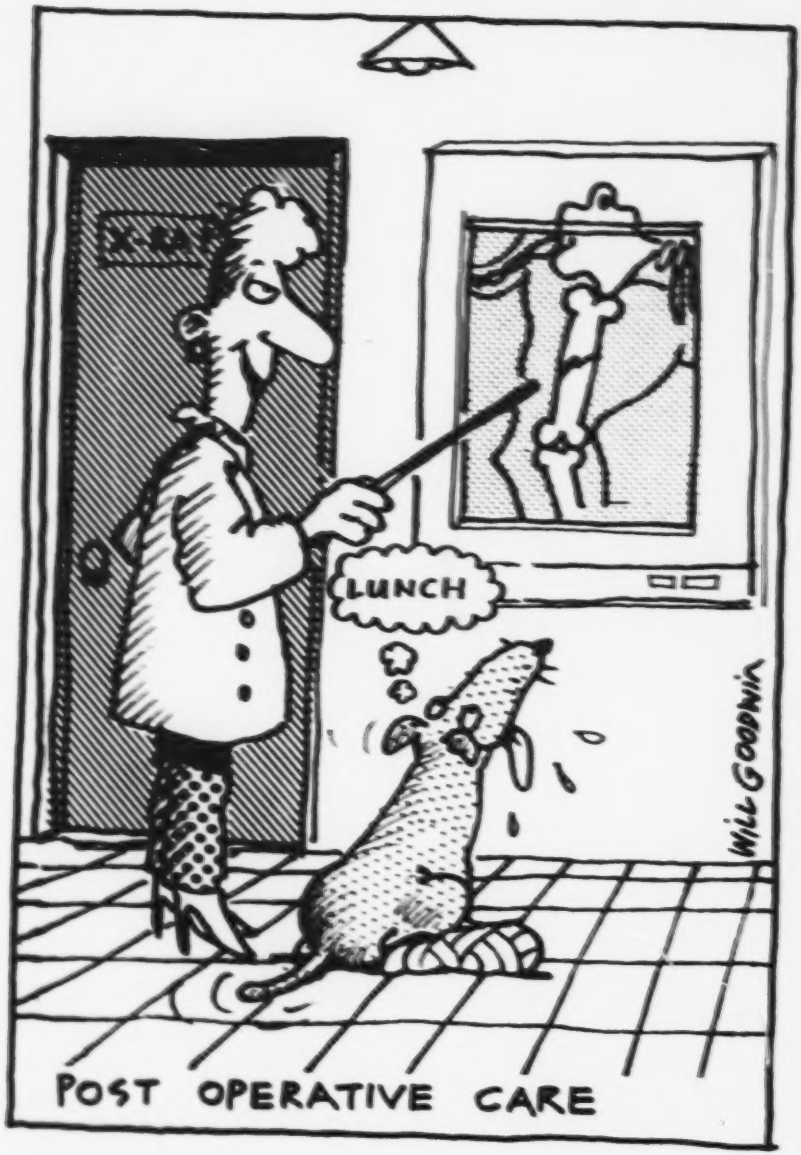
I wanted to work with animals. When I left school, I started as a *volunteer*. Then I did two years part-time vet nursing. You have to work 15 hours or more in a clinic. Then you can start the vet. nursing course. At the same time, I did a 3 year part-time domestic animal care course.

HIS BARK
IS WORSE THAN
HIS BITE
WILL GOLDWIN.
CLEANING IS
A BIG PART OF IT.

So I was juggling school and work. You don't have to do these courses. It's up to your employer to give you time off. Or you can become qualified after 2,000 working hours. But then you don't have a certificate. I learnt a lot getting my *certificate* at the T.A.F.E. I like medical and scientific things. But I didn't know any vet. nurses before. I couldn't become a vet. My school results weren't good enough. I didn't want to go to university then. Now it's difficult to go back to study. I'm used to working and earning a wage.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO DURING A WEEK?

This is a domestic animal clinic. It is mostly cats and dogs. Because we're near the hills, we get a bit of wildlife. Sometimes we have possums, birds and goats. Although the wildlife shelter takes most of them. There are different *shifts*. I work 7.30 until 2-ish in the afternoon. Or I work 12.30 or 2 until 8.30 at night. Sometimes there are after-hours calls.


LUNCH
WILL GOODMAN
POST OPERATIVE CARE

Each morning, the animals are cleaned, changed and fed. Each animal has a card. The animal's progress has to be recorded. They are treated and medicated.

Then there is the *routine* surgery. I help the vet. I prepare the animal for surgery. Sometimes I scrub up. I take care of the animals after their operations. Then I *sterilise* the instruments. Surgery goes from 8.30 until about 2 o'clock. I tidy up. Then we have the afternoon treatments. In the afternoon, animals are *discharged*. I speak to the clients unless there is a note on the card. Then the vet speaks to them. Between 4 and 6 p.m. I explain animal care to the *clients*. I answer their questions.

WHAT HAPPENS AT WEEKENDS?

At weekends, only emergencies are treated. On Saturday morning there are two vets, a receptionist and a nurse on duty. They finish at 12 o'clock. Then one vet and a nurse are here for the weekend.

Mike Baldwin
SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE POPULAR..

HAVE ANY FUNNY THINGS HAPPENED?

Funny things do happen. Sometimes people mistake our clinic for a human surgery. They ring and ask, 'Could we have the maternity ward please? My wife's having a baby.'

DO THE ANIMALS MAKE THE WORK DIFFICULT?

Sometimes animals bite and scratch. Once a cat hid in the cupboard. It was after the cat had surgery. The cat made a comfortable bed for himself. It took us hours to find him. Sometimes you get cases that go on for ages. Some are difficult to treat. There may be vomit to clean up in the cages. Being a vet nurse is not about cuddling kittens.

A vet. *surgeon's* job can be hard too. One of our vets was operating on a dog. The dog had a big *abscess*, the contents hit the vet in the face! We laughed. He didn't.

ARE SOME ANIMALS MORE POPULAR THAN OTHERS?

Fashions in pets affect us. If certain breeds of animals become popular, some require more treatment than others. For example, if *Pugs* became popular, we'd probably see a lot of them. But if *Labradors* became popular, they don't need much vet care.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU DON'T LIKE TO DO?

Putting animals down is sad. It can be a relief if you've stopped their pain and suffering. I get cross with some people. Some people treat an animal like a pot plant rather than a member of the family. They won't spend extra money to have them treated.

A pet gets hit by a car. It needs *expensive* surgery. Sometimes the owners will put it to sleep rather than paying. Then they go out weeks later to buy another pet. The same thing can happen over again. Sad things happen...

SUCH AS?

A sick cat was put to sleep. The owners asked his daughters to pick up the cat from the clinic. He didn't say that the cat had been put to sleep. The girls were very shocked.

WHAT KIND OF CLINIC IS IT?

We're a private hospital. We're not an animal welfare agency. But people still bring us stray animals. We try to find homes for kittens. But we have to send strays to the pound, or the *RSPCA*, or a welfare agency.

ARE YOUR FRIENDS MOSTLY WORKMATES?

I like working in a big clinic like this. There are 5-6 people working here at any one time. We're about the same age. We go out together. Vet nursing is a young job.

PROPER PET CARE
WILL GOODWIN
IT'S A LOVE JOB

ARE YOU WELL PAID?

At 25 or older, the money is not enough. There are male vet nurses but not many. It's a love job, not a money job. Pay is poor. We're one of the lowest paid, semi-skilled groups. Even a dental nurse gets ten dollars a week more.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHANGE ANYTHING IN YOUR WORK?

I'd like to do minor surgery. But nurses are not permitted to do that. So I'm limited. Some vet nurses take over the business side of a clinic. They do the books.

DOES YOUR WORK HELP OTHERS?

A vet nurse is a useful job. Most people have pets. We help them look after their pets. I'd rather nurse animals than people. Animals don't whinge!

GLOSSARY

scientific	*factual, requiring trained skills*
volunteer	*unpaid work*
certificate	*document of qualifications*
shifts	*work times*
routine	*regular*
sterilise	*to rid instruments from germs*
discharged	*release*
client	*customer*
surgeon	*qualified Doctor who operates*
abscess	*sore under the skin*
Pugs	*breed of dog*
Labradors	*breed of dog*
expensive	*costly*
RSPCA	*Royal Society for the prevention of Cruelty to Animals*

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